



**LINCOLN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
January 28, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Lincoln County Social Services Board was held on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 1:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Social Services Building. Members present were Chrystal Hoyle, Chairperson; Dr. Sherry Hoyle, Vice Chairperson; Jill Eaddy; Daphne Ingram; and Alex Patton. Others in attendance were Matthew Hillman, Director; Kelley Miles, Deputy Director; Ruth Lockman, Business Manager; Mendie Kelly, Children Services Program Manager; Jason Hughes, Placement Services Program Manager; Tiffany Barnette, Medicaid Program Manager; Roni Duckworth, Economic Services Program Manager; Jennifer Sigmon, Adult Services Program Manager; and Denise Dula, Economic Services Support Supervisor/Designated Clerk to the Social Services Board.

**Call to Order**-Chrystal Hoyle called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**Invocation**-Alex Patton gave the invocation.

**Public Comment**-No public comments were made.

**Oath of Office**-Denise Dula administered the Oath of Office to Alex Patton. Mr. Patton was appointed by the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners on 12-27-24 to fill the remaining term of Cathy Davis, which will not count as a term against him and will expire on 6-30-26. If Mr. Patton is reappointed by the County Commissioners, this will be his first term.

**Adoption of the Agenda**-Adoption of the Agenda was approved by motion from Dr. Sherry Hoyle, second by Daphne Ingram, with all members in favor.

**Minutes**-Minutes from December 13, 2024 meeting was approved by motion from Jill Eaddy second by Dr. Sherry Hoyle, with all members in favor.

**Old Business**-Matthew Hillman gave an update on the Recipient Eligibility Determination Audit (REDA)-Round Two. Lincoln County DSS just finished eight of ten audit months. Twenty cases are pulled monthly and include ten approved and ten denied. The audit procedures are designed to determine the county DSS's compliance with 96.8 percent accuracy. Based on audit results this past month, Lincoln County DSS will not pass the REDA and will be placed on an Accuracy Improvement Plan (AIP). There have been no paybacks with the audit findings. Once placed on the AIP to come off the plan, DSS must pass three consecutive months. Mr. Hillman noted DSS will take proactive measures to improve our accuracy rate and will continue to grow and learn.

Matthew Hillman explained in November 2024, the Department received notice that all counties must participate in the next Work First planning process for Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2026-2028. Current electing counties had to notify the state by January 10, 2025, if they wished to remain an electing county. Mr. Hillman stated during the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners meeting on December 16, 2024, Lincoln County DSS requested consideration and approval of Electing County Status and planning committee appointments for Fiscal Year 2026-2028. The Board of Commissioners approved to keep Lincoln County as an electing county and appointment of planning committee members. Mr. Hillman expressed Electing County Status allows counties to develop their own plan to assist Work First recipients to become employed and self-sufficient. On February 3, 2025, Lincoln County DSS will ask the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners for consideration and approval of the FY 2026-2028 Work First Plan.

Matthew Hillman stated last year, a new state pre-service training redesign was proposed and approved with a seven week training model utilized and 4E dollars being pulled down for reimbursement of training. Counties have found they are not receiving as much reimbursement for pre-service training since utilizing pre-service travel forms. Mr. Hillman noted since counties are not required to use the pre-service travel forms, Lincoln County DSS will now claim on the 1571 for reimbursement.

Matthew Hillman noted during last fiscal year, Lincoln County DSS received \$20,000.00 in Emergency Placement Funds from the state. Fortunately, none of those funds had to be utilized by DSS. As a result, Lincoln County DSS returned \$10,000.00 to the state and shared \$10,000.00 with other counties. Current fiscal year, Lincoln County DSS received \$37,000.00 in Emergency Placement Funds from the state with \$18,000.00 being used to date. Being able to pay enhanced rates has been very beneficial with more placements becoming available. Mr. Hillman acknowledged he wanted to make Board members aware counties may not receive Emergency Placement Funds next year. As more information is available, the Board will be updated.

Matthew Hillman stated a Dear County Director letter dated January 7, 2025 was received notifying counties starting in January 2025, the state would begin implementing the required Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) corrective action plan for counties not meeting MOU requirements. The corrective action process, as outlined in the General Statute, will be delayed for the 25 counties that were most impacted by Hurricane Helene and remain under a federal state of emergency. Lincoln County is included among the 25 counties most impacted. Mr. Hillman noted he is very proud of the statistical MOU data for Lincoln County DSS. Standards are consistently achieved on a regular basis, which reflects the hard work of Lincoln County DSS managers and staff.

Matthew Hillman expressed a Dear County Director letter dated December 20, 2024 was sent to counties regarding Corrective Action Protocol. Ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of children is a priority for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS). The NCDHHS-DSS has the responsibility and authority to evaluate a county department of social services' provision of child welfare services. The delivery of these services must be in accordance with applicable state laws, rules, and policies. When delivery of those

services involves violation of law, administrative rule, or violation of parents' constitutional rights, or egregious practice outside of law, statute gives NCDHHS-DSS the authority to intervene in the services. Intervention may include, but not limited to, a corrective action plan (CAP) to address issues and practices and relieving the Director of DSS of oversight of Child Welfare Services and assuming direct oversight of child welfare services for the county. To ensure consistency, should a CAP be warranted, a protocol has been developed outlining the criteria, process, and responsibilities of county and NCDHHS staff. This protocol become effective January 1, 2025.

**New Business**-Matthew Hillman explained the Subsidized Child Care Assistance Program Waiting List Local Policy for Lincoln County had not been updated since 2021. Many counties in North Carolina have implemented waiting lists for subsidized childcare assistance due to lack of funding. The waiting list helps counties decide which families in certain categories will be exempt from the list, prioritize services to populations in a specific order, set aside a fixed percentage of childcare funds to serve vulnerable populations, allocate services fairly, and determine how much funding is needed. Counties will continue to accept applications but can only approve priority cases. Families who meet eligibility criteria may be placed on a waiting list until funding becomes available. Mr. Hillman noted the Division of Child Development policy requires Lincoln County DSS to conduct a waiting list survey twice a year in March and September to ensure the waiting list remains current and families on the list continue to be eligible for childcare assistance.

The Subsidized Child Care Assistance Program Waiting List Local Policy for Lincoln County was approved by motion from Alex Patton, second by Daphne Ingram, with all members in favor.

Matthew Hillman stated the Department of Health and Human Services held onsite meetings to discuss disaster response regarding Hurricane Helene. Thoughts were shared on the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) and shelters that operated during the response. Conversations regarding D-SNAP and shelters went well. Mr. Hillman noted a disaster response to Hurricane Helene in Lincoln County occurred on Friday, September 27, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. with the activation of a Red Cross shelter to assist residents displaced because of the hurricane. The shelter was operated at Lincolnton High School then moved to Lincolnton Middle School due to generator issues. There were four residents accommodated. The shelter ended on Saturday, September 28, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. During the shelter process, due to the widespread damage across counties in North Carolina, it was found assistance to displaced residents would be better served if DSS staff were divided into teams instead of three geographical regions within the county. There will be twelve teams with nine to ten DSS staff members on each team. This will allow greater flexibility should DSS staff have their own disaster related issues. Should a nuclear disaster occur, staff split in regions would work better because a disaster of this type would most likely be in a centralized location.

Matthew Hillman noted the North Carolina General Assembly has approved nine million dollars in Disaster Energy Assistance for the 25 counties that were most affected by Hurricane Helene. Individuals and households who live in one of the disaster counties can apply for Disaster Energy benefits. The energy crisis must be directly related to damage from Hurricane Helene.

Things covered by the funding include utility bill assistance, reconnection, deposits, meter repair, propane and oil tanks, line repair, fuel delivery, insulation, furnace repair or replacement, coats, blankets, space heaters, etc. Disaster funding began on January 15, 2025. At the end of March 2025, emergency energy funding will be evaluated to see if reallocations are needed.

Matthew Hillman expanded on disaster related assistance by stating the NC Division of Social Services is responsible for allocating NC DSS Essential Services Funds to county departments of social services to provide essential services and support to both vulnerable adults involved with the adult services system and children and families involved in the child welfare system who have been impacted by Hurricane Helene. In addition, one million dollars has been allocated to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program to assist households who have suffered hardship due to the aftermath of Hurricane Helene and meet the income eligibility criteria.

**Budget Reports**-During the meeting, Ruth Lockman presented 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Projection Fiscal Year 2024-2025 reports. Ms. Lockman gave a thorough analysis of accounts having the most effect due to over or under spending. Highlighted in the review were fulltime regular salaries including social security, retirement expense, and hospitalization; child support incentives; and CAP-C programs. Ms. Lockman noted the projected expenses for the rest of Fiscal Year 2024-2025. Board members had no questions regarding the budget projections.

Matthew Hillman presented a power point presentation giving a comprehensive overview of Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget proposal. Areas covered were DSS staff numbers, data, achievements, barriers, positions requests, building requests, and operating expenses. Mr. Hillman noted the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget meeting with County Manager Davin Madden is on Wednesday, March 5, 2025. Board members had no questions regarding the 2025-2026 proposed budget. All members thanked Mr. Hillman and DSS managers for the hard work in preparing the budget presentation.

The presentation of Lincoln County Department of Social Services proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 to the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners was approved by motion from Daphne Ingram, second by Jill Eaddy, with all members in favor.

**Statistical Reports**-Matthew Hillman stated Lincoln County DSS continues to do well on the Memorandum of Understanding statistical data. There are no new updates or concerns.

**Other**-No information presented.

**Closed Session**-No Closed Session needed.

**Date of Next Meeting**-February 25, 2025 at 1:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn by Alex Patton, second by Daphne Ingram, with all members in favor.

This meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

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Date Minutes Approved

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Chrystal Hoyle, Chairperson

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Matthew Hillman, Director

Respectfully Submitted:

Denise S. Dula  
Economic Services Support Supervisor;  
Designated Clerk to the Social Services Board of Lincoln County DSS  
Cc: file copy